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ABSTRACT

This guide is a compilation of factors considered important in the selection of tests for bilingual/bicultural programs. It is intended for use by test selectors or teachers in bilingual education, and does not presume to be exhaustive or authoritative. Basically the guide consists of questions the test selector or teacher should ask when selecting tests. Questions concern the purpose of the test, the relation of the test to the student, test validity, and practical considerations such as financial factors and ease of scoring. (Author/AM)

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GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING TESTS FOR USE IN BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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To the reader: It is hoped that this list will be of some practical use to you. It is not meant to be complete, exhaustive or authoritative. It is merely a summary of all the factors that the writer became aware of in the course of test selection. You will, of course, have your own contributions to make to this summary.

I. For what PURPOSE are you giving a particular test? What INFORMATION do you want it to give you?

A. For Program Evaluation? To show whether Program Objectives are being acheived?

B. To measure Student Achievement? To measure growth in cognitive skills, subject matter mastery, attainment of affective or psychomotor objectives?

C. For Diagnostic Purposes?

1. For placement prior to instruction?

a. To determine whether the student possesses skills prerequisite to the learning sequence to follow?

b. To ascertain whether the student has already mastered any elements of the learning sequence to follow?

c. To obtain information concerning the students learning style? Whether any particular teaching techniques or instructional methods are best for him or her?

2. For Diagnosis after or during instruction?

a. To point out underlying causes of student deficiencies in the course of learning?

b. To determine whether the student did not respond to instruction as a result of the instruction itself or whether physical, emotional, cultural or environmental factors in the student him - or herself are accountable?

3. It is to be noted that all forms of diagnosis have as their purpose the PRESCRIPTION of teaching-learning activities for the student.

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D. Regarding the use of American Standardized Tests (intelligence or achievement) which are to be used with extreme caution, and then for clearly defined reasons presented below (i.e., rarely will such tests be used for the purposes for which they were originally constructed, if at all; such tests were created for children having the commonality of experience described as English speaking, middle class American, therefore, they are inappropriate for the bilingual/bicultural child as measures of intelligence or achievement);

1. To see how well bilingual/bicultural children can perform on a standardized test (intelligence or achievement) in comparison to the middle class American child?

2. To see how well the bilingual/bicultural child can do on a dominant culture value oriented test?

3. To obtain evidence of how implicit functional objectives of various education programs are failing to serve bilingual/bicultural children?

(The above three reasons are advanced as defensible by Olivia G. Martinez in Proceedings of BABEL Workshop and Preliminary Findings Multilingual Assessment Program, 1972, p.x. Another reason presented against the use of standardized tests in bilingual/biclutural programs is that they do not reflect the kinds of things that are going on in such programs -- a very plausible reason.)

4. In a pre/post situation, to show the degree to which the bilingual/bicultural child is culturally different on tests which measure such things as desirable social-emotional or readiness behaviors at the time of pretesting and, by comparison with posttest results, to ascertain the degree to which the instructional program modified the child's behavior (as reflected in the test), i.e., the degree to which the bilingual/bicultural child was acculturated or mastered behaviors considered desirable or necessary for success in the American classroom situation.

II. How does the BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL CHILD stand with reference to the test?

A. Is the test too long or too competetive for the bilingual child?

B. Is there anything in terms of the item types or test tasks that will "turn off" the child, cause him to react negatively or not at all? will he have difficulty handling multiple-choice items? will he or she be able to manipulate objects, etc? are the directions too long or complicated?

C. Are there any cultural factors on the test which are inappropriate to the bilingual/bicultural child? pictures, words, concepts or behaviors so totally alien to his own cultural experience as to render the test invalid?

III. Is the test VALID?

A. Is the test going to measure what you want it to measure? Is it going to give you the information you are looking for? Are the items a true sampling of the behaviors you want to test?

B. Are the items on the test truly representative of the curriculum, course, content, objectives, etc. that you want to test?

C. Do you think that the test can do what the publisher says it can do?

IV. Practical Considerations

A. Is the test administrable? Does it require individual, small group or large group administration? Do you have the necessary staff, equipment or physical setting to administer it?

B. Is the test too expensive? Do you have the money to buy it once or repeatedly? Does it require the purchase of expensive equipment? Do you have the money for machine scoring, computer punch-outs, etc. should they be necessay or desirable?

C. It is easily scored? will scoring be time consuming? If so, do you have people to help you, etc.?

D. Does the test give you the information you need quickly and easily or in a form that you can utilize conveniently for diagnostic/prescriptive purposes? Does the test give any diagnostic/prescriptive information at all? Is a time-consuming item analysis necessary to obtain such information? Is a lot of difficult, time consuming "bookeeping" involved?

E. If the test is norm-referenced, are the scores (percentiles, standard scores, stanines, grade-equivalents) of any use to you? If you are using such a test diagnostically, can you correlate items to your own instructional objectives easily? If the test is criterion-referenced or objectives-referenced, is it clear which items refer to which skills and is it easy to pass from items or test results to prescriptive activities?

F. Do the test makers in any way give you guidelines, information, suggestions in using the test diagnostically? Do they tell you what to look for in the way the child responds, how the latter might give you insight into the child's learning style, cognitive structure, deficiencies, etc.?

G. Do the test makers give suggestions for prescriptive activities in any way? Are they general or specific? (Many tests appearing today have very extensive provisions for prescriptive activities, sometimes item for item on the test.)

H. Do you have the necessary materials, equipment, setting and personnel to implement the suggested and necessary prescriptive activities?

I. Do you have the backing of your program director and/or other administrative staff in the administration, scoring and utilization of test results in the form of prescriptive follow-up?

J. Is the test, for the reasons cited above or for any other valid or justifiable reasons not mentioned above, worth giving? If not, don't bother wasting your time or condemning yourself to frustration.